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SUBJECT Director Casey/Freedom of Information Act

GLORIA MINOT: Tuesday, CIA Director William Casey claimed the Freedom of Information Act should be rescinded because it gives foreign intelligence agents, quote, "legal license to poke into our lives." Casey made his remarks at the annual National Convention of the American Legion. But, as we hear in this report from Libby Lawson, there's another side to the story.

LIBBY LAWSON: The CIA Director said he questions very seriously whether a secret intelligence agency and the Freedom of Information Act can coexist for very long. William Casey cites an example. He says the ease with which the Soviet Union can gain information has allowed them to bypass research and immediately produce deadly weapons that threaten the United States. He said US security would suffer and intelligence networks would lose effectiveness if the country continues to release confidential information, and that secrecy is an accepted way of American life, such as in the medical and legal professions and should be applied to the so-called intelligence business as well.

While Casey feels there's a certain amount of validity to this argument, there's a flip side to the issue. Supporters of the Freedom of Information Act say it should be preserved and enforced to prevent US government abuses such as the Watergate scandal.

In the book, Former Secrets, compiled by Evan Hendricks of Privacy Times, it lists several instances whereby government agencies, including the CIA, try to suppress information that presently has to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act.

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One example from the book cites that in 1974 the CIA tried to recover a Soviet submarine that had sunk, to search for documents and the like. Well, the book indicates the CIA asked US newspapers not to mention the incident, and it so happened they did not. The New York Times was particularly mentioned. However, the incident was reported later in the Washington Post.

Libby Lawson, WHUR News.